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Mr. John

(18)

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF DEFENSE  
WASHINGTON 25, D.C.

5 April 1962

SENSITIVE

MEMORANDUM FOR GENERAL TAYLOR  
SPECIAL GROUP (AUGMENTED)

From: Brig. Gen. Lansdale

Subject: Operation Mongoose

For the information of the members of the Special Group (Augmented), the following are highlights of current matters in Operation Mongoose reported to me:

I.

Trial. The trial of the Playa Girón prisoners has ended, according to Havana Radio, with the sentences to be announced at a later date. CIA has accepted the figure of 1,182 prisoners. The trial prosecutor reportedly asked for sentences of death or 20-years at hard labor.

The US-resident families of the prisoners decided not to go to Cuba, according to the State Department.

"Food for Prisoners." At the 29 March Special Group (Augmented) meeting, State was tasked with ascertaining if a deal could be made with Castro on the prisoners, in return for food from private charitable organizations. Dick Goodwin has reported that State is still trying to find an emissary. The Australian government turned it down. The Italian delegate to the UN has received approval from Rome to act as an emissary, at 1145 this morning, according to the State Department.

Clemency. Dick Goodwin reported that Goulart received a reply from President Burticos of Cuba and informed the White House yesterday; in addition, Burticos politely noted Goulart's appeal for Cuban clemency. State had pursued appeals from other governments, notably Mexico and Canada, as well as an OAS resolution.

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Information. Don Wilson reports that USIA has handled the trial as the top news story, except for yesterday when Coulart's visit took over with background stories, governmental and editorial reactions in the Western Hemisphere. Ten USIA posts attempted to get local journalists to attend the trial; only Guatemala and Trinidad sent requests to Cuba, which were turned down. Cubans in Miami generally were unwilling to be interviewed by VOA; only two interviews were played. Current play is now being given to Castro's speech containing slurring remarks about Latin American leaders.

II.

Program Reports. CIA is issuing a special progress report of its activities in connection with Operation Mongoose. Since Mr. McCone directed this means of keeping the Special Group (Augmented) informed of CIA efforts, we are confronted with the problem of security and arranging for proper reporting of all Departments and Agencies on the Operations Mongoose team. If CIA activities are to be reported separately, then I propose to ask the others (State, Defense, USIA) to prepare similar reports directly to the members of the Special Group, with an agreement of the reporting date being the same for all. I further plan then to make a composite report to the Special Group (Augmented) at least every two weeks, with due recognition to the separate reports which have been submitted by the several Departments and Agencies. If separate reporting is to be continued, then I would underscore heavily that security means for handling these reports must be tightened.

There are some developments, in areas such as Defense support of CIA, which should be brought to the attention of the Special Group (Augmented). If you wish, I will be prepared to report on this at your next meeting.

Distribution:

Mr. McCone, CIA

Mr. Johnson, State

Mr. Gilpatrick, Defense

The Attorney General

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